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T H E  
C A S E  
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Episcopal Churches  
I N T H E  
U N I T E D S T A T E S  
C O N S I D E R E D.

By  
Bishop William White

*To make new articles of faith and doctrine, no man  
thinketh it lawful; new laws of government, what  
commonwealth or church is there which maketh not at  
one time or another?*

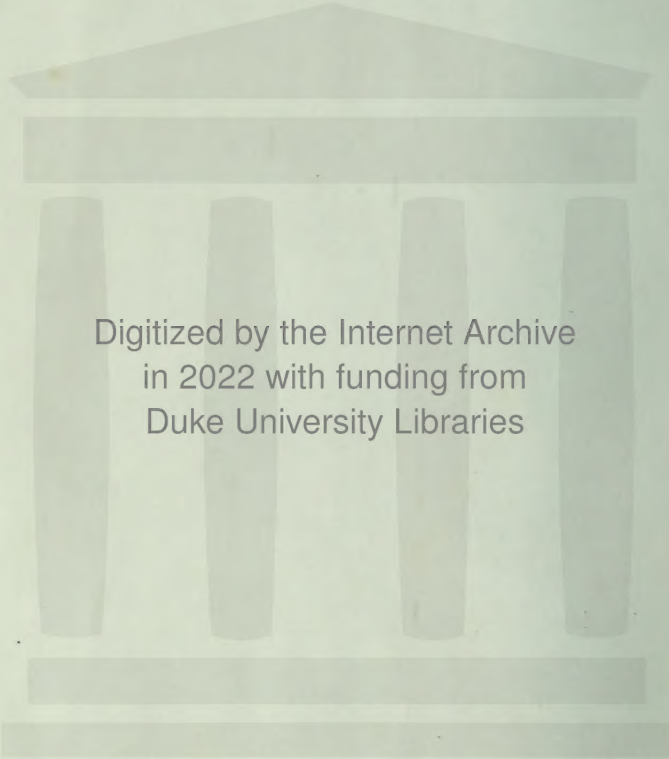
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For

The rev<sup>d</sup> Dr Ewing  
from his humble Serv<sup>t</sup>  
W. White.

## P R E F A C E.

**I**T may be presumed, that the members of the episcopal churches, some from conviction, and others from the influence of ancient habits, entertain a preference for their own communion; and that accordingly they are not a little anxious, to see some speedy and decisive measures adopted for its continuance. The author believes, therefore, that his undertaking needs no apology to the public; and that those for whom it is designed will give him credit for his good intentions.

Nothing is farther from his wishes, than the reviving of such controversies as have been found destructive of good neighbourhood and the christian temper; especially as he conceives them to be unconnected with the peculiar situation of the churches in question. He has, for this reason, avoided the discussion of subjects, on which episcopalians differ from their fellow christians; and even of those, concerning which a latitude of sentiment has prevailed among themselves.

He thinks his design is subservient to the general cause of religion and virtue; for a numerous society, losing the benefit of the stat-  
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ed ordinances within itself, cannot but severely feel the effect of such a change, on the piety and morals of its members. In this point of view, all good men must lament that cessation of public worship, which has happened to many of the episcopal churches, and threatens to become universal.

The present work he also believes to be connected with the civil happiness of the community. A prejudice has prevailed with many, that the episcopal churches cannot otherwise exist than under the dominion of Great-Britain. A church government that would contain the constituent principles of the church of England, and yet be independent of foreign jurisdiction or influence, would remove that anxiety which at present hangs heavy on the minds of many sincere persons.

Such is the natural tendency of this performance. If it should fail of effect on account of the insufficiency of the author, it may nevertheless be of advantage, by drawing to the subject the attention of others, better qualified for the undertaking.



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THE  
C A S E  
OF THE  
Episcopal Churches, &c.

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C H A P T E R I.

**T**O form an idea of the situation of the \*episcopal churches in the present crisis, we must observe the change their religious system has undergone in the late revolution.

On whatever principles the independence of the united states may be supposed to rest; whether merely on establishments which have very probable appearances of being permanent, or on withdrawing the protection of the former sovereign, or (as the author of these sheets believes) on the inherent right of the community to resist and effectually to exclude unconstitutional and oppressive claims, there result from it the reciprocal duties of protection and allegiance,

\* The GENERAL term "episcopal" is usually applied, among us, to the churches professing the religious principles of the church of England. It is thought by the author to be sufficiently descriptive, because the other episcopal churches in America are known by names PECULIAR TO THEMSELVES.



allegiance, enforced by the most powerful sanctions of natural and revealed religion.

It may reasonably be presumed, that, in general, the members of the episcopal churches are friendly to the principles, on which the present governments were formed; a fact particularly obvious in the southern states, where the episcopalians, who are a majority of the citizens, have engaged and persevered in the war, with as much ardor and constancy as their neighbours. Many even of those whose sentiments were at first unfavorable to the revolution, now wish for its final establishment, as a most happy event; some from an earnest desire of peace, and others from the undistinguishing oppressions and ravages of the British armies. Such persons accordingly acknowledge allegiance, and pay obedience to the sovereignty of the states.

Inconsistent with the duties resulting from this allegiance, would be their subjection to any spiritual jurisdiction, connected with the temporal authority of a foreign state. Such a dependence is contrary to the fundamental principles of civil society, and therefore cannot be required by the scriptures; which, being accommodated to the civil policy of the world at large, neither interfered with the constitution of states as found established at the time of their promulgation, nor handed down to succeeding ages any injunctions of such a tendency.

To apply these observations to the case of the episcopal churches in the united states. They have been heretofore subject to the ecclesiastical authority of the Bishop of London. This authority was derived under a commission from the crown; which, though destitute of legal operation, found a general acquiescence on the part of the churches; being exercised no farther than to the necessary purposes of ordaining and licensing ministers. Hereby a connection was formed, between the spiritual authority in England and the episcopal churches

in America, the latter constituting a part of the Bishop of London's diocese.

But this connection is dissolved by the revolution. Had it been matter of right, it would have ceased with the authority of the crown; being founded on consent, and the ground changed, it cannot be allowed of in future, consistently with the duties resulting from our allegiance\*. Even suppose the Bishop of London hereafter exempted, by Act of Parliament, from the necessity of exacting the oaths, a dependence on his Lordship and his successors in that See would be liable to the reproach of foreign influence, and render episcopalians less qualified than those of other communions, to be entrusted by their country; neither (as may be presumed) will it be claimed after the acknowledgment of the civil independence, being contrary to a principle clearly implied in many of the institutions of the church of England, particularly in the 34th article of religion; which asserts, that "every particular or national church hath authority to ordain, change and abolish ceremonies or rites of the church, ordained only by Man's authority, so that all things be done to edifying." Though the episcopal churches in these states will not be national or legal establishments, the same principle applies, being the danger of foreign jurisdiction.

The ecclesiastical power over the greater number of the churches, formerly subsisting in some legislative bodies on this continent, is also abrogated by the revolution. In the southern states, where the episcopal churches were maintained by law, the assemblies might well have been supposed empowered, in conjunction with the other branches of legislation, to regulate their external government; but

\* Were the British colonies independent of their parent kingdom, the episcopalians in this country would be a society independent of the national church.

Dr. Chandler's Appeal farther defended. Page 111.

but now, when the establishments are overturned, it would ill become those bodies, composed of men of various denominations (however respectable collectively and as individuals) to enact laws for the episcopal churches, which will no doubt, in common with others, claim and exercise the privilege of governing themselves.

All former jurisdiction over the churches being thus withdrawn, and the chain which held them together broken, it would seem, that their future continuance can be provided for only by voluntary associations for union and good government. It is therefore of the utmost consequence, to discover and ascertain the principles, on which such associations should be framed.

## C H A P T E R II.

W H O E V E R should consider the subject before us as merely speculative, and propose the suggestions of his own judgment or fancy, without attention to the sentiments, habits, and circumstances of the people interested, would probably have little weight, and would unquestionably not be useful. In the present investigation, therefore, it will be proper to keep in view the particular situation of the churches in question.

In most cases where spiritual jurisdiction has been established or defined, such has been the connection between church and state, that it was scarcely possible to adopt measures, which did not shew some traces of accommodation to political views; but this may be avoided in the present instance, where all denominations of christians are on a level, and no church is farther known to the public, than as a voluntary association of individuals, for a lawful and useful purpose. The effect of this should be the avoiding of whatever may give the churches the appearance of being subservient to party, or tend to unite their members on questions of a civil nature.

This



This is unquestionably agreeable to the simplicity of the gospel; it is conceived to be also, under the present circumstances, agreeable to good policy; for whatever church shall aim at such objects, unless on account of an invasion of their religious privileges, will be suspected by all others, as aiming at the exclusive government of the country.

In the parent church, though whatever regards religion may be enacted by the clergy in convocation, it must afterwards have the sanction of all other orders of men, comprehended in the parliament. It will be necessary to deviate from the practice (though not from the principles) of that church, by convening the clergy and laity in one body. The former will no doubt have an influence proportioned to the opinion entertained of their piety and learning; but will never (it is presumed) wish to usurp an exclusive right of regulation; a sentiment which cannot more properly be expressed than in the following words of that great defender of the church of England Mr. Hooker; "The most natural and religious course of making laws, is that the matter of them be taken from the judgment of the wisest in those things which they are to concern. In matters of God, to set down a form of prayer, a solemn confession of the articles of the christian faith and ceremonies meet for the exercise of our religion, it were unnatural not to think the pastors and bishops of our souls, a great deal more fit than men of secular trades and callings——howbeit, when all that the wisdom of all sorts can do is done for the devising of laws in the church, it is the general consent of all that giveth them the form and vigor of laws \*." And in another place "but were it so that the clergy might give laws to all the rest, forso much as every estate doth desire to enlarge the bounds of their own liberties, it is easy to see how injurious this would prove to men of other conditions†."

B

The



The power of electing a superior order of ministers ought to be in the clergy and laity together, they being both interested in the choice. In England, the bishops are appointed by the civil authority; which was an usurpation of the crown at the Norman conquest, but since confirmed by acts of parliament. The primitive churches were generally supplied by popular elections; even in the city of Rome, the privilege of electing the bishop continued with the people to the tenth or eleventh century; and near those times there are resolves of councils, that none should be promoted to ecclesiastical dignities, but by election of the clergy and people. It cannot be denied that this right vested in numerous bodies, occasioned great disorders; which it is expected will be avoided, when the people shall exercise the right by representation.

Deprivation of the superior order of clergy should also be in the church at large. In England, it has been sometimes done by the civil authority; particularly in the instances of Queen Mary's roman-catholic bishops by Queen Elizabeth, and of the non-juring bishops at the revolution; which last occasioned a separation from the national church, Sancroft and the others being still considered by their advocates as bishops of their respective sees, and Tillotson and his associates reprobated by them as schismatics. So far is the civil policy of England from permitting an entire separation of ecclesiastical authority, that in Queen Ann's reign, when Bishop Worsley was deprived for immorality, it was allowed, that as a peer he might have objected to the arch-bishop's jurisdiction, provided he had pleaded his privilege in time. It is well known, that the interference of the civil authority in such instances as the preceding has been considered by many as inconsistent with ecclesiastical principles; an objection which will be avoided, when deprivation can only be under regulations enacted by a fair representation of the churches, and by an authority

thority entirely ecclesiastical. It is presumed, that none will so far mistake the principles of the church of England, as to talk of the impossibility of depriving a bishop.

In England, dioceses having been formed before parishes, a church supposes one common flock, subject to a bishop and sundry collegiate presbyters; without the idea of its being necessarily divided into smaller communities, connected with their respective parochial clergy; the latter having been introduced some considerable time after the conversion of the nation to the christian faith. One natural consequence of this distinction, will be to retain in each church every power that need not be delegated for the good of whole. Another, will be an equality of the churches; and not, as in England, the subjection of all parish churches to their respective cathedrals.

The last circumstance to be here mentioned, is the impossibility that the churches should provide a support for that superior order of clergy, to which their acknowledged principles point; of consequence, the duty assigned to that order ought not materially to interfere with their employments, in the station of parochial clergy; the superintendence of each will therefore be confined to a small district; a favorite idea with all moderate episcopals.

It is proposed to offer the outlines of a frame of church government, founded on the preceding sentiments.

### C H A P T E R III.

THE author offers the following sketch of a frame of government, though he is far from thinking it complete; to make it so even according to his own ideas, would carry him beyond the compass intended in this essay.

As the churches in question extend over an immense space of country, it can never be expected, that representatives from each church should assemble in one place; it will be more convenient for them to associate in small districts, from which representatives may be sent to three different bodies, the continent being supposed divided into that number of larger districts. From these may be elected a body representing the whole.

In each smaller district, there should be elected a general vestry or convention, consisting of a convenient number (the minister to be one) from the vestry or congregation of each church, or of every two or more churches, according to their respective ability of supporting a minister. They should elect a clergyman their permanent president; who, in conjunction with other clergymen to be also appointed by the body, may exercise such powers as are purely spiritual, particularly that of admitting to the ministry; the presiding clergyman and others to be liable to be deprived for just causes, by a fair process, and under reasonable laws; meetings to be held as often as occasion may require.

The assemblies in the three larger districts may consist of a convenient number of members, sent from each of the smaller districts severally within their bounds, equally composed of clergy and laity, and voted for by those orders promiscuously; the presiding clergyman to be always *one*, and these bodies to meet once in every year.

The continental representative body may consist of a convenient number from each of the larger districts, formed equally of clergy and laity, and among the clergy, formed equally of presiding ministers and others; to meet statedly once in three years. The use of this and the preceding representative bodies is to make such regulations, and receive appeals in such matters only, as shall be judged necessary for their continuing one religious communion.

These



These are (what was promised) no more than outlines; which it will not be proper to dismiss, without a few observations on the degree of power to be exercised, in matters of faith, worship, and government.

For the doctrinal part, it would perhaps be sufficient to demand of all admitted to the ministry, or engaged in ecclesiastical legislation, the questions contained in the book of ordination; which extend no farther than an acknowledgement of the scriptures, as a rule of faith and life; yet some general sanction may be given to the thirty-nine articles of religion, so as to adopt their leading sense\*; which is here proposed rather as a chain of union, than for exacting entire uniformity of sentiment. If the last be considered as a desirable object, the articles have undeniably been found insufficient for the purpose; which is not here said from an opinion that such was the intention of the compilers, but rather with a conviction, that they designedly left room for a considerable latitude of sentiment; if to the above there be objected the danger of a public opposition between ministers, this obvious answer may be made; that the strictest tests ever devised cannot be so effectual to prevent such conduct, as the regulation contained in the 53d canon; which

\* Suppose, for instance, a form PRESENTING that which Dr. Ferdinando Warner, a late ecclesiastical Historian of the episcopal church, says (Book 16) was proposed in the reign of Charles II. by the Lord Keeper Bridgman, Bishop Wilkins, and Chief Justice Hale, "to serve instead of all former subscriptions." The form was this, "I do hereby profess and declare, that I approve the doctrine, worship and government established in the church of England, as containing all things necessary to salvation, and that I will not endeavour by myself or any other, directly or indirectly, to bring in any doctrine contrary to that which is so established; and I do hereby promise that I will continue in the communion of the church of England, and will not do any thing to disturb the peace thereof."



which considers it as indecent and punishable, independently of the merits of the doctrines litigated.

As to divine worship, there must no doubt be somewhere the power of making necessary and convenient alterations in the service of the church. But it ought to be used with great moderation; otherwise the communion will become divided into an infinite number of smaller ones, all differing from one another and from that in England; from whence we may expect considerable numbers to migrate hereafter to this country; who, if they find too wide a deviation from the ancient practice, will probably form an independent communion of their own. Whatever may in other respects be determined on this head, it is presumed the episcopalian are generally attached to that characteristic of their communion, which prescribes a settled form of prayer.

On the subject of government, whether civil or ecclesiastical, there is great truth and beauty in the following observation of the present Bishop of St. Asaph, "the great art of governing consists in not governing too much." Perhaps it would be sufficient, if an immoral life were followed by exclusion from the sacrament and ecclesiastical employment; deprivation from church benefices following of course. The above is not to be understood as excluding the enforcing such rules, as are necessary to preserve decency and order. As to excommunication or an entire separation from the church, however necessary it was in the primitive ages, when christianity itself, being not generally known, and misrepresented as a sanction for lewdness, treason and clandestine murders, must have been essentially wounded by the immoralities of any of its professors; there is great room to doubt of there being the same use in it at present, when the vices of a professing christian are universally known to be opposite to the precepts of his religion. Such are the tyranny and hypocrisy

too frequently arising from the exercise of this power, that it may be thought safest to leave men to those great sanctions of duty, the will of God and a future retribution; attended as they will generally be with a sense of shame, dissuading from actions so notoriously scandalous, as to be a foundation for church censures.

In the preceding pages, the idea of superintending ministers has been introduced; but not a word has been said of the succession supposed necessary to constitute the episcopal character; and this has been on purpose postponed, as demanding a more minute discussion.

#### C H A P T E R IV.

ON the subject of episcopacy, the general opinion of the churches in question is of peculiar consequence; yet it can be collected only from circumstances; to assist in ascertaining it, the two following facts are stated.

Wherever these churches have been erected, the ecclesiastical government of the church of England has been adhered to; they have depended on the english bishops for ordination of their clergy, and on no occasion expressed a dissatisfaction with episcopacy. This, considering the liberty they enjoyed in common with others, of forming their churches on whatever plan they liked best, is a presumptive proof of their preferring the episcopal government; especially as it subjected them under the former connection to many inconveniences, such as sending to the distance of three thousand miles for ordination, the scandal sometimes brought on the church by the ordination of low and vicious persons\*, the difficulty of getting rid of immoral ministers, and that several of the clergy formed attachments of which this country has been always jealous, and which have

\* Generally by deceptions on the Bishop of London.

have at last proved extremely prejudicial to her interests.

On the other hand, there cannot be produced an instance of lay-men in America, unless in the very infancy of the settlements, soliciting the introduction of a bishop\* ; it was probably by a great majority of them thought an hazardous experiment. How far the prerogative of the king as head of the church might be construed to extend over the colonies, whether a bishop would bring with him that part of the law which respects ecclesiastical matters, and whether the civil powers vested in bishops in England would accompany that order to America, were questions which for ought they knew would include principles and produce consequences, dangerous and destructive to their civil rights†.

From these two facts it may fairly be inferred, that the episcopalians on this continent will wish to institute among themselves an episcopal government, as soon as it shall appear practicable, and that this government will not be attended with the danger of tyranny, either temporal or spiritual.

But it is generally understood, that the succession cannot at present be obtained. From the parent church

\* If there has been any, it must have been from so few, as rather to corroborate than weaken the sentiment conveyed.

† Whether the above appendages would have accompanied an English bishop to America, the author is no judge. That they were generally feared by the episcopalian laity, he thinks the only way of accounting for the cold reception they gave (a fact universally known) to every proposal for the introduction of a bishop. Those who pleaded for the measure on a plan purely spiritual, thought he would not be invested, by the laws of England, with such powers ; but in case it had proved otherwise, they proposed the limiting him by act of parliament. What the people would have thought of measures, which must have required an act of that body to render them harmless, no person formerly acquainted with their temper and sentiments need be told ; and whether they judged right or not, recent events have abundantly shewn.



church most unquestionably it cannot; whether from any is presumed to be more than we can at present be informed. But the proposal to constitute a frame of government, the execution of which shall depend on the pleasure of persons unknown, differing from us in language, habits, and perhaps in religious principles, has too ludicrous an appearance to deserve consideration; the peculiar circumstances of the war in which our country is engaged preclude us from procuring the succession in those quarters, to which alone application could consistently be made; the danger of offending the British government constraining (perhaps) a refusal of what, it would of course be indelicate in us to ask. Now, on the one hand, to depart from episcopacy, would be giving up a leading characteristic of the communion; which, however indifferently considered as to divine appointment, might be productive of all the evils generally attending changes of this sort. On the other hand, by delaying to adopt measures for the continuance of the ministry, the very existence of the churches is hazarded, and duties of positive and indispensable obligation are neglected.

The conduct meant to be recommended, as founded on the preceding sentiments, is to include in the proposed frame of government a general approbation of episcopacy, and a declaration of an intention to procure the succession as soon as conveniently may be; but in the mean time to carry the plan into effect without waiting for the succession.

The first part of this proposal is conceived to be founded on the plain dictates of propriety, prudence, and moderation: for if the undertaking proceed on acknowledged principles, there will be far less shock to ancient habits, and less cause of intestine divisions, than if new principles are to be sought for and established. To illustrate this by an allusion; had our old governments been so adjusted to the



genius of the people and their present circumstances, as at the revolution to have required no farther change than what necessarily arose from the extinction of royal authority, it is obvious, that many pernicious controversies would have been prevented. Such, however, except in a few instances, was not the happiness of the colonies. But it is precisely the situation of the episcopal churches in their religious concerns; none of their constituent principles being thereby changed, but what were founded on the authority of the king.

In the minds of some, the idea of episcopacy will be connected with that of immoderate power; to which it may be answered, that power becomes dangerous, not from the precedency of one man, but from his being independent. Had Rome been governed by a presbytery instead of a bishop; and had that presbytery been invested with the independent riches and dominion of the papal see, it is easy to conceive, of their acquiring as much power over the christian world, as was ever known in a Gregory or a Paul.

It may be further objected, that episcopacy is anti-republican; and therefore opposed to those ideas which all good citizens ought to promote, for securing the peace and happiness of the community. But this supposed relation between episcopacy and monarchy arises from confounding english episcopacy, with the subject at large. In the early ages of the church, it was customary to debate and determine in a general concourse of all christians in the same city; among whom the bishop was no more than president. Matters were indeed too often conducted tumultuously, and after a manner which no prudent and peaceable man would wish to see imitated; but the churches were not the less episcopal on that account. Very few systems of religious discipline on this continent are equally republican with that proposed in the preceding pages. The adage of King James I. "No bishop no King, and no King no bishop," ought only to be understood concerning

cerning that degree of episcopal power together with its civil appendages, of which he certainly meant it.

But it will be also said, that the very name of "Bishop" is offensive; if so, change it for another; let the superior clergyman be a president, a superintendant, or in plain english, and, according to the literal translation of the original, an overseer. However, if names are to be reprobated, because the powers annexed to them have been abused, there are few appropriated to either civil or ecclesiastical distinctions, which would retain their places in our catalogue.

The other part of the proposal was an immediate execution of the plan, without waiting for the episcopal succession. This is founded on the presumption, that the worship of God and the instruction and reformation of the people are the principal objects of ecclesiastical discipline; if so, to relinquish them from a scrupulous adherence to episcopacy, is sacrificing the substance to the ceremony.

It will be said, we ought to continue as we are, with the hope of obtaining it hereafter. But are the acknowledged ordinances of Christ's holy religion to be suspended for years, perhaps as long as the present generation shall continue, out of delicacy to a disputed point, and that relating only to externals? It is submitted, how far such ideas encourage the suspicion of want of attachment to any particular church, except so far as is subservient to some civil system. All the obligations of conformity to the divine ordinances, all the arguments which prove the connection between public worship and the morals of a people, combine to urge the adopting some speedy measures, to provide for the public ministry in these churches; if such as have been above recommended should be adopted, and the episcopal succession afterwards obtained, any supposed imperfections of the intermediate ordinations might, if it were judged proper, be supplied

plied without acknowledging their nullity, by a *conditional* ordination resembling that of *conditional baptism* in the liturgy; the above was an expedient proposed by Arch-bishop Tillotson, Bishops Patrick, Stillingfleet and others at the revolution, and had been actually practised in Ireland by Arch-bishop Bramhall\*.

But it will be said, the dropping the succession even for a time would be a departure from the principles of the church of England. This prejudice is too common, not to deserve particular attention.

## C H A P T E R V.

IT would be to the greatest degree surprising, if the church of England, acknowledged by all protestant churches to lay a sufficient stress on the essential doctrines and duties of the gospel, should be found so immoderately attached to a matter of external order, as must in some cases be ruinous to her communion. But, far from this, it will not be difficult to prove, that a temporary departure from episcopacy in the present instance would be warranted by her doctrines, by her practice, and by the principles on which episcopal government is asserted.

Whatever that church holds must be included in the "thirty-nine articles of religion;" which were evidently intended for a comprehensive system of necessary doctrine. But what say these articles on the present subject? Simply, that "the book of consecration of arch-bishops and bishops and the ordering of priests and deacons, doth contain all things necessary thereunto; neither hath it any thing that of itself is superstitious and ungodly†." The canyons speak the same sense, censuring those who shall "affirm that the government of the church

\* Nichols's Defence of the church of England, Introduction. † Article 36.



" church of England by arch-bishops, bishops, &c. " is antichristian or repugnant to the word of " God †." And those who " shall affirm that the " form and manner of making and consecrating bi- " shops, priests and deacons, containeth any thing in " it that is repugnant to the word of God, or that " that they who are thus made bishops, &c. are not " lawfully made, &c. ‡."

How can such moderation of sentiment and ex-  
pression be justified, if the episcopal succession be so  
binding, as to allow no deviation in a case of ex-  
treme necessity? Had the church of England de-  
creed concerning baptism and the Lord's supper,  
only that they were " not repugnant to the word of  
" God," and that her offices for those sacraments  
were " not superstitious and ungodly," would she  
not be censured by almost all christendom, as re-  
nouncing the obligation of those sacraments? Equal-  
ly improper would be the application of such mo-  
derate expressions to episcopacy, if (as some ima-  
gine) she considered it to be as much binding as bap-  
tism and the Lord's supper.

The book of consecration and ordination carries  
the idea no farther, except that the preface as al-  
tered at the restoration (for it was not so in the  
old preface) affirms that " from the apostles times  
" there have been these orders in Christ's church,  
" bishops, priests and deacons." But there is an  
evident difference between this and the asserting  
the unlawfulness of deviating from that practice in  
an instance, extraordinary and unprovided for.

Next to the doctrine of the church, let us enquire,  
whether her practice will furnish us with a prece-  
dent to justify the liberty we plead.

Many of the English protestants, during the per-  
secution by Queen Mary, took refuge in foreign  
countries, particularly in Germany and Geneva.  
When protestantism revived at the auspicious ac-  
cession

† Canon 7.

‡ Canon 8.

cession of Queen Elizabeth, and at the same time a cloud was gathering on the continent in consequence of the emperor's victories over the princes of the Smalcaldic league, many of the exiles returned to their native land ; some of whom, during their absence, had been ordained according to the customs of the countries where they had resided ; these were admitted without re-ordination to preach and hold benefices ; one of them\* was promoted to a dean'ry ; but at the same time, as several of them were endeavouring to make innovations in the established church, it was provided in a law (13th Elizabeth 12.) that " whoever shall pretend to be a " priest or minister of God's holy word, by reason " of any other form of institution, consecration " or ordering, than the form set forth by act of " parliament, before the feast of the nativity of " Christ next ensuing, shall in the presence of the " bishop——declare his assent and subscribe to all " the articles of religion agreed on, &c†." Here existed an extraordinary occasion, not provided for in the institutions for common use ; the exigency of the case seems to have been considered ; and there followed a toleration, if not implied approbation, of a departure in that instance from episcopal ordination. There cannot be expected another

\* Whittingham.

† Bishop Burnet says (History of his own times, anno 1661) that until the act of uniformity, passed soon after the restoration, " those who came to England from the foreign churches had not been required to be ordained among us." If so, the argument founded on practice extends farther than it has been here urged. The act of Elizabeth, however, had no operation beyond the Christmas next ensuing ; neither indeed did it pronounce that a good ordination which would have been otherwise defective ; but its being meant to comprehend those who were AT THAT TIME invested with foreign non-episcopal ordination, is evident from their being actually allowed to preach and hold benefices, on the condition of their subscribing the thirty-nine articles.

ther example, because no similar instance of necessity has happened; unless that at the restoration be considered as such; but, it is presumed, no stress will be laid on the omission of the like indulgence at that period; when the minds of the ruling episcopalians, irritated by recent sufferings, were less intent on conciliation than on retaliation\*.

Let us next take a view of the grounds on which the authority of episcopacy is asserted.

The advocates for this form maintain, that there having been an episcopal power originally lodged by Jesus Christ with his apostles, and by them exercised generally in person, but sometimes by delegation (as in the instances of Timothy and Titus) the same was conveyed by them before their decease to one pastor in each church, which generally comprehended all the Christians in a city and a convenient surrounding district. Thus were created the apostolic successors, who, on account of their settled residence are called *bishops by restraint*; whereas the apostles themselves were *bishops at large*, exercising episcopal power over all the churches, except in the case of St. James, who from the beginning was bishop of Jerusalem. From this time the word "episcopus," used in the new testament indiscriminately with the word "presbuteros," (particularly in the 20th chapter of the acts where the same persons are called "episcopoi" and "presbuteroi,") became appropriated to the superior order of ministers. That the apostles were thus succeeded by an order of ministers superior to pastors in general, episcopalians think they prove by the testimonies of the ancient fathers, and from the improbability that so great an innovati-  
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\* Bishop Burnet assigns a reason still less excusable; that many great preferments were in the hands of obnoxious persons, who, on account of their services towards the restoration, could not otherwise be ejected, than by making the terms of conformity difficult. History of his own times, anno 1661.



on (as some conceive it) could have found general and peaceable possession in the 2d or 3d century, when episcopacy is on both sides acknowledged to have been prevalent\*. The argument is here concisely stated, but (as is believed) impartially; the manner in which the subject is handled by Mr. Hooker and Bishop Hoadly being particularly kept in view.

Can any reasonable rule of construction make this amount to more than ancient and apostolic practice? That the apostles adopted any particular form, affords a presumption of its being the best, all circumstances at that time considered; but to make it unalterably binding, it must be shewn enjoined in positive precept. Bishop Hoadly clearly points out this distinction in his answer to Dr. Calamy. The latter having considered it as the sense of the Church, in the preface to the ordinal, that the three orders were of divine appointment, and urged it as a reason for non-conformity; the bishop, with evident propriety, remarks that the service pronounces no such thing; and that therefore Dr. Calamy created a difficulty, where the church had made none; there being "some difference (says he) between these two sentences—bishops, priests and deacons are three distinct orders in the church by divine appointment—and—from the apostles time there have been in Christ's church bishops, priests and deacons†."

Now,

\* The original of the order of bishops was from the presbyters choosing one from among themselves to be a stated president in their assemblies, in the 2d or 3d century. Smectymnuan divines, as quoted in Neal's history of the Puritans, anno 1640.

† Reasonableness of conformity; part I.

\* The same distinction is accurately drawn and fully proved by Stillingfleet in "the Irenicum." But as that learned prelate was afterwards dissatisfied with his work (the most probably not with that part of it which would have been to our purpose) it might seem uncandid to cite the

Now, if the form of church government rest on no other foundation, than ancient and apostolic practice; it is humbly submitted to consideration, whether episcopalians will not be thought scarcely deserving the name of christians, should they, rather than consent to a temporary deviation, abandon every ordinance of positive and divine appointment.

Any person, reading what some divines of the church of England have written against dissenters, would in general widely mistake their meaning, should he apply to the subject before us, the censures he will sometimes meet with, which have in view, not merely the merits of the question, but the duty of conforming to the established church, in all things not contrary to the law of God. Thus Bishop Stillingfleet, who at the restoration had written with great tenderness towards the dissenters, and many years afterwards preached a sermon on a public occasion containing severe animadversions on their separation; on being accused of inconsistency, replies (in the preface to his treatise on the unlawfulness of separation) that the former was "before the laws were established;" meaning principally the act of uniformity. So also Bishop Hoadly says, the acceptance of re-ordination by the dissenting ministers, would not be a denial of that right, which (as they conceived) presbyters had to ordain; but a confession that their former ordination was "so far null and void, that God did not approve the exercise of that right in opposition

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the authority of his OPINION. Burnet, his cotemporary & friend, says (History of his own times, anno 1661) "to avoid the imputation that book brought on him, he went into the humours of an high sort of people beyond what became him, perhaps beyond his own sense of things." The book, however, was it seems easier REJECTED than REFUTED; for tho' offensive to many of both parties, it was managed (says the same author) with so much learning and skill, that none of either side ever undertook to answer it."

"to the lawful settled method\* " Dr. Henry Maurice also, who has written with great learning and reputation in defence of episcopacy, makes the same distinction; observing that the "dissenters do for reign churches great injustice when they concern them in their quarrel," the ordination of the latter being "not only without, but in opposition to bishops, against all the established laws of this church, &c†." Even where the same distinction is not exprest, it is generally implied. Whether the above censures are well or ill founded, is a question that has no connection with our subject; they cannot be thought applicable to the liberty here pleaded‡.

Again, it cannot be denied, that some writers of the church of England apply very strong expressions to episcopacy, calling it a divine appointment, the ordinance of Christ, and the law of God, and pronounce it to be of divine right. Yet, in reason they ought to be understood only as asserting it to be binding, wherever it can conveniently be had; not that law and gospel are to cease rather than episcopacy. Mr. Hooker, who uses such strong expressions, makes nevertheless a clear distinction between matters of necessity and those of ecclesiastical polity; as may be seen at large in his third and

\* Reply to objections against episcopal ordination.  
† Maurice against Clarkson, page 453.

‡ In England, the members of the established church consider the dissenters as blameable in not conforming to it as such, there being nothing required contrary to the law of God. These, on the other hand blame the members of the establishment, for not yielding to their conscientious scruples, which thus exclude them from public offices, and subject them to considerable burthens. Such were the principal sources of the animosities which have subsisted between the two parties; and hence arises an argument for charity and mutual forbearance among religious societies in America, with whom the same causes of contention and mutual censure have no place, and with whom of course the same degree of bitterness would be less excuseable than in England.



and fourth books. Even Arch-bishop Whitgift, said by some\* to have been the first in his high station, under whose patronage such pretensions were annexed to episcopacy, and whose zeal for that form and the other rights of the church, made him verily believe in the famous conference at Hampton court, that "the king spoke by the spirit of God," is quoted by Bishop Scillingfleet, as asserting that "no kind of government is expressed in the word "or can necessarily be concluded from thence†." In short, particular expressions which writers use from zeal for that form they endeavour to establish, are not to be given in proof of their opinions, concerning the conduct suited to extraordinary occasions. Many instances to the same purpose might be produced of english divines qualifying such high expressions and guarding against seeming consequences; but this part of the subject shall conclude with the authority of a clergyman of this country, who a few years ago wrote on episcopal government. He insists on it as of divine right, asserts that "the laws relating to it bind as strongly as the laws which oblige us to receive baptism or the holy eucharist‡," and that "if the succession be once broken, not all the men on earth, not all the angels of heaven, without an immediate commission from Christ, can restore it§;" Nevertheless, he acknowledges "the necessity of bishops is no more than a general necessity, or in other words, bishops according to the belief of the church of England, are necessary only where they can be had||. He then distinguishes between cases where the

\* Dr. Warner says (Book 14.) that "Arch-bishop Bancroft was the first man who had preached up the divine right of episcopacy in the church of England." The first occasion of his doing this, is said by others to have been when he was Whitgift's chaplain.

† Irenicum, chapter 3<sup>d</sup>.

‡ Dr. Chandler's appeal, page 7. § Ibid, page 4.

|| Chandler's appeal defended, page 64.

the necessity is real, and those where episcopacy had been willingly and expressly rejected, as by the people of Scotland and the english dissenters.

Now if even those who hold episcopacy to be of divine right, conceive the obligation to it to be not binding when that idea would be destructive of public worship, much more must *they* think so, who indeed venerate and prefer that form as the most ancient and eligible, but without any idea of divine right in the case. This the author believes to be the sentiment of the great body of episcopalians in America; in which respect they have in their favour *unquestionably* the sense of the church of England. and, *as he believes* the opinions of her most distinguished prelates for piety, virtue and abilities.

## C H A P T E R VI.

I T is to be expected, that the far greater number of writers in defence of episcopal government confine their observations to the ordinary state of the church, without giving their opinions on supposed cases of necessity. Yet, if it were required to multiply authorities, and writers were consulted with that view, it is probable that many more than the following might be produced. But, as the lawfulness of deviation, in cases of necessity, is a fair inference from the sentiments of *expressly* to the purpose (perhaps) all, it will be sufficient if those quoted rank among the most respectable for their authority.

The first mentioned shall be the venerable Hooker. His books on ecclesiastical polity are universally allowed to be a work of masterly judgment, and deep erudition; they are frequently spoken of, as containing the most rational and complete defence of the church of England; and were recommended by King Charles I. (whose attachment to episcopacy will not be doubted) as the best for fixing the principles of his children, on those questions which had distracted the nation. This accomplished  
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ed writer, after asserting with great zeal the authority of episcopal government, makes the following exception; "when the *exigence of necessity* doth constrain to leave the usual ways of the church, which otherwise we would willingly keep; when the church must needs have some ordained and neither hath nor can have possibly a bishop to ordain; in case of *such necessity* the law of God hath oftentimes and may give place; and therefore we are not, simply and without exception, to urge a lineal descent of power from the apostles, by continued succession, in every effectual ordination\*."

The same great man, speaking in another place of some churches not episcopal, says, "this their defect and imperfection, I had rather lament in such a case than exaggerate; considering that men often-times, without any fault of their own, may be driven to want that kind of polity or regiment, which is best; and to content themselves with that which either the irremediable error of former times, or the *necessity of the present* hath cast upon them†."

Had Mr. Hooker been asked to define "*the exigence of necessity*," could he have imagined any more urgent than the case in question? Or had he been enquired of concerning "*the necessities of the present times*," could he have mentioned any in the cases to which he alludes (those of Scotland and Geneva,) so strongly pleading for the liberty he allows, as those now existing in America?

The name of Bishop Hoadly will probably be as long remembered, as any on the list of british worthies; and will never be mentioned without veneration of the strength of his abilities, the liberality of his sentiments, and his enlightened zeal for civil liberty. He has written in defence of episcopal government,

\* Ecclesiastical Polity, Book 7, Section 14.

† Ibid, Book 3, Section 11.



government, with more argument and better temper, than is commonly to be met with in controversial writings. This amiable prelate expresses himself as follows, "as to the credit of the reformed churches abroad, we think it no presumption, as we censure them not, who in a case of necessity went out of the ordinary method, so to expect they will not censure us for not approving such irregularities, where there is no such necessity for them\*." In another place he says, "for my own part I cannot argue that episcopacy is essential to a christian church, because it is of apostolical institution; and on the other hand, I do argue, that we are obliged to the utmost of our knowledge, to conform ourselves to the apostolical model, unless in such where the imitation is impracticable or would manifestly do more hurt than good to the church of Christ; neither of which can possibly be affirmed in the ordinary state of the church†."

1. All cases

What necessity was there of the "reformed churches abroad" equal to ours? Is not an immediate imitation of the ancient usage "*impracticable*?" Would not such a plan as has been proposed be conforming (as far as circumstances allow) to our ideas of "the apostolic model?"

The character of Arch-bishop Usher for extensive learning and fervent piety is generally known; and is distinguished both by his great moderation on the subject of episcopacy, and by the service it has received from his indefatigable researches. In a letter to Dr. Bernard he writes thus "in places where bishops cannot be had, the ordination of presbyters stands valid‡." What part of the christian world could the learned primate have named, of which it could have been so properly said as it may

\* Reasonableness of conformity, part I.

† Defence of episcopal ordination, conclusion.

‡ Quoted from Neale's History.

may be of ours, that "ordination by bishops can-  
"not be had?"

The great reformer and martyr Arch-bishop Cranmer was one of the first characters of the age in which he lived, for learning, piety and virtue; and is supposed to have done more than any other towards compiling the liturgy of the church of England; "His equal (says Dr. Warner) was "never yet seen in the see of Canterbury, and I "will take upon me to say, that his superior never "will." In the reign of Henry VIII. according to Bishop Burnet \*, there were proposed by the King, to this great man, in conjunction with other learned divines, certain questions, among which are the two following, with the Arch-bishop's answers annexed:

Question. Whether if it fortune a Prince christian, to conquer certain dominions of infidels, having none but the temporal learned men with him, it be defended by God's law, that he and they should preach the word of God there or no, and also make and constitute priests there or no?

Answer. It is not against God's law; but contrariwise they ought indeed so to do; and there be histories that witness, that some christian princes and other laymen have done the same.

Question. Whether it be defended by God's law, that if it so fortune that all the bishops and priests of a region were dead; and that the word of God should remain there unpreached, and the sacrament of baptism and others unministered; that the King of that region should make bishops and priests to supply the same or no?

Answer. It is not forbidden by God's law.

The above may be offered as the opinions of not only Cranmer, but also of most of the eminent bishops

\* History of the reformation, anno 1540. Stillington, with less appearance of authenticity, says it was in the reign of Edward VI.

shops and other clergy of that period; for whoever will attend to all the questions with the several answers as recorded by Burnet\*, will find, that altho' the arch-bishop seems singular in his sentiments as to the original institution of bishops and priests, they generally agree with him on the supposed occasions of necessity. On the former subject, the learned historian believes, that Cranmer soon afterwards changed his opinion; but, the reason assigned for that belief, if it be well founded†, does not extend to the purpose for which his authority is here cited.

Now every circumstance in the cases supposed makes the principle apply, with the greater force, to that now under consideration. If a christian King may on an emergency constitute a bishop, much more may the whole body of the churches interested; especially when they interfere not thereby with the civil magistrate. If a Prince would be justifiable in taking such a step, rather than have recourse to the spiritual authority of some neighbouring and allied kingdom, much more would we, who labor under peculiar political difficulties. If it were commendable on the meer hope of converting

\* History of the reformation, appendix to vol. I.

† The reason is Cranmer's signing the book called "the erudition of a christian man." This book has led some to believe that the arch-bishop's principles on church government were unsettled at the time of its publication. That it contradicts itself on that subject, is certain; but this was owing not to Cranmer's inconsistency, but that of the King. In the answers of the former as given by Burnet, his sentiments seem fully fixed, and (perhaps) are reconcileable with the episcopal plan, according to the distinction taken between the APPROPRIATED and LARGER meanings of the word "Bishop." As to "the erudition," Guthrie says (history of England, vol. 3, page 597.) "the writings were modelled by the King, as he wanted them to appear before the parliament and public;" and Dr. Warner says (Book 11) "it was more probably a declaration of the king's religion, than of any other man's in the kingdom."



verting infidels to the christian faith, it would be more so, for the purpose of maintaining the principles of christian knowledge and practice, among those who are already of the number of it's professors. If a prince ought to do this from concern for the spiritual welfare of his subjects, much rather ought we, for that of ourselves and our children.

On the credit of the preceding names, the author rests this the last part of his subject; and if his sentiments should meet with an unfavorable reception, he will find no small consolation from being in a company so respectable.

Perhaps, however, there would be little room for difference of sentiment among the well informed, if the matter were generally taken up with seriousness and moderation, and were to rest on religious principles alone. But unhappily there are some, in whose ideas the existence of their church is so connected with that of the civil government of Britain, as to preclude their concurrence in any system, formed on a presumed final separation of the two countries. Prejudices of this sort will admit of no conviction but such as may arise from future events; and are therefore no farther considered in this performance, than with a sincere sorrow, that any persons, professing to be of the communion of the church of England, should so far mistake the principles of that church, as to imagine them widely different from what form the religion of the scriptures; which, as Bishop Sherlock observes, "stand clear of all disputes about the rights of princes and subjects; so that such disputes must be left to be decided by principles of natural equity and the constitution of the country\*."

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\* Vol. 4. Discourse 13th.

The indefeasible right of Kings is pretended to be founded on certain passages of scripture. The author takes the liberty of referring to the very sensible sermon above quoted

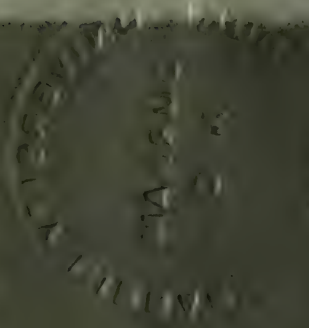
As for those who are convinced that the "United States," have risen to an independent rank among the nations, or who even think that such may probably be the event of the war, they are loudly called on to adopt measures for the continuance of their churches, as they regard the public worship of God, the foundation of which is immutable; as they esteem the benefit of the sacraments, which were instituted by the supreme bishop of the church; and as they are bound to obey the scriptures, which enjoin us "not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is."

More especially is this their duty, if they entertain a peculiar preference for the principles and worship of their own communion, from a persuasion of their superior excellence. That the church of England is a creature of the state, an engine of civil policy, and no otherwise to be maintained than by human laws, has been said by some, as a reason for their dissenting from her. If the same prejudice has been with others a reason for conformity, it is to be hoped they are comparatively few, and that the great majority of episcopalians, believing that their faith and worship are rational and scriptural, have no doubt of their being supported, independent of state establishments; nay, it is presumed there are many, who, while they sincerely love their fellow christians of every denomination, knowing (as one of their prayers expresses) that the "body of Christ" comprehends "the blessed company of all faithful people," are more especially attached to their own

quoted, for an easy and natural explanation of the passages alluded to; whereby they are vindicated from a sense which makes the Gospel an engine of despotism and oppression, and which, however sincerely believed by some, is with others a mere trick of state. Although Bishop Sherlock's reputation in the church of England is generally known, it may be proper to mention, that his sermons are among the books formerly sent out by the honourable "Society for propagating the Gospel," to be distributed by their missionaries.

own mode of worship, perhaps from education, but as they conceive, from its being most agreeable to reason and scripture, and its most nearly resembling the pattern of the purest ages of the church. On the consciences of such, above all others, may be pressed the obligation of adopting speedy and decisive measures, to prevent their being scattered "like sheep without a shepherd," and to continue the use of that form of divine service, which they believe to be "worshipping the Lord in the beauty of holiness."

THE END.













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